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Our Shortage of Scientists

In an age when science is the foundation of almost all progress and the keystone to both national security and in-
 GPO:RGH: prosperity, American science is being retarded by inadequate educational facilities.

These have been matters of great concern at recent meetings of scientists, including the convention of the American Chemical society.

Recently Allen W. Dulles, central intelligence agency director, estimated that at the current rate the United States will graduate 900,000 scientists and engineers in the present decade. Soviet Russia at the same time will be graduating 1,200,000. And Russia's graduates will not be dissipated in consumer goods industries, but will be concentrated on military and heavy industry projects.

But even without worrying about Russia, the American picture is not good. Charles Allen Thomas, president of the Monsanto Chemical Co., had some disturbing figures for the American Chemical society. Last year there was a need for 6,000 new science teachers in this country. Yet only 4,000 qualified graduates came out of our educational institutions, and half of those did not go into teaching.

Half the nation's high schools do not teach chemistry, and thus fail to interest students in it and encourage them to chemistry careers. Another 53% of the high schools have dropped physics, Thomas said—in an age when physics is necessary to an understanding of our everyday world. This year there were openings for 35,000 to 40,000 engineers in this country. But only 26,000 were graduated.

Lack of educational facilities and of encouragement to scientific careers by the schools only partly explains the shortage

of scientific students, according to some observers. They contend that scientific careers have been discouraged by a general attitude that scientists are "queer geniuses" and somehow suspect. We have seen no statistics to support this view. If it is correct, it is certainly unfortunate.

The United States is still making amazing strides in science. But not at the rate we could if we encouraged our brightest youth to become scientists and threw off any possible chains of fear and mistrust.

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